



City of Falls Church South Washington Street Corridor Study

November 2008

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)
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CITY OF FALLS CHURCH - SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET CORRIDOR STUDY

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The City of Falls Church is undergoing dramatic change. New buildings and construction projects are visible around the City. Much of this new activity is higher-density, multistory mixed-use, with potential for a fairly active street presence. New projects such as The Byron, The Spectrum, Pearson Square and the planned City Center signal a new era in the evolution of the City. Almost all new major projects are designed to create an interesting and inviting pedestrian environment, and it is anticipated that they will include shopping, entertainment and employment destinations for many City of Falls Church residents living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In the past, it has been commonplace to commute to downtown via single-occupancy vehicle, contributing to peak-hour congestion. In the years ahead, much of the 'traffic' to and from the City's new downtown is likely to be people walking, riding bikes, using transit, or other non-automobile modes. South Washington Street is likely to share in this new traffic pattern due to its central location in the City of Falls Church.

South Washington Street has dual roles in the City—it is simultaneously a major east-west route on the US highway system—maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)—and it is a primary artery in the City's transportation network. In its current configuration, South Washington Street presents significant challenges for pedestrians. The road carries heavy amounts of vehicle traffic, there are few signalized crossings, and the relatively narrow sidewalks and shallow lot frontages force pedestrians to walk close to traffic. In spite of these shortcomings, South Washington Street sees a considerable number of pedestrians every day.

The study area is comprised of the areas along and adjoining South Washington Street (US Highway 29) from Broad Street (State Highway 7) to the City's western limits. There are several catalysts for major change in the corridor:

- Due to a high quality of life, an excellent public school system, proximity and easy access to Washington, DC, stable neighborhoods and a variety of other factors, the City of Falls Church is a highly desirable community. Many people are willing to pay a premium to live in the City and take advantage of the assets found therein. Redevelopment and construction activity has remained vibrant in the City in spite of softening markets region-wide.
- There are two Metro stations just outside of City of Falls Church that further contribute to the desirability of the community. The City is currently developing a streetscape plan for the portion of North Washington Street between Broad Street and the East Falls Church Metro Station. Additionally, the City is collaborating with Arlington County, the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority (WMATA) and VDOT on the East Falls Church Planning Study, which will result in a vision for transit-oriented development in the East Falls Church area of Arlington County and City of Falls Church.



Figure 1-1: City Center Concept Plan

Source: City of Falls Church Department of Economic Development website: <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/Content/Government/Departments/EconomicDevelopment/CityCenter.aspx?cnlid=386>

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- The planned City Center project has allowed the City to reinvent its downtown—turning a once ordinary collection of commercial buildings into a vibrant and active environment that is likely to draw people in from the City and the region (see Figure 1-1). This project will anchor the eastern edge of the South Washington Street corridor study area.

This report is divided into seven chapters and an appendix. Chapter 2 describes the existing conditions for pedestrians in the study area. Chapter 3 outlines a series of design principles that should inform the ultimate character and functionality of the corridor and guide land-use and transportation decisions made over time. These principles are meant to serve as the starting point for a larger discussion of land use, transportation and economic issues as they factor into future planning processes.

Chapter 4 outlines short-term safety improvements to enhance the projects currently underway in the study area. The recommendations will enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists in the short-term. Chapter 5 provides long-term capital improvement recommendations to enhance non-motorized access and mobility while improving vehicular safety and circulation. These enhancements would involve more planning, time and investments, but should be considered as the area redevelops.

Chapter 6 provides concept-level cost estimates for implementing short- and long-term recommendations. Chapter 7 concludes this report and offers a vision for moving forward.

Full-size maps showing conceptual recommendations have been appended to the report narrative. The appendix also includes a copy of the walking tour survey and responses.

Key Statistics

The City of Falls Church is located approximately five miles to the west of Washington, DC and is bordered to the east by Arlington County. Fairfax County borders the City to the north, west, and south. According to the U.S. Census, the City's 2006 population was 10,799.¹ Approximately 16% of the employed population takes public transportation (including taxicab) to work and 3% walk to work.²

The project study area is approximately one mile in length from the intersection of South Washington Street with Broad Street to the western edge of the City. Near Broad Street, three- to five-story commercial properties, as well as The Falls Church, generate significant amounts of foot traffic throughout the week. As one moves west away from this intersection, development becomes less intense, and buildings are set farther away from South Washington Street.

About the Transportation and Land Use Connections Program

The Transportation and Land Use Connections (TLC) Program provides support to local governments in the metropolitan Washington region as they work to improve transportation / land-use coordination. Better integration of land use and transportation often includes transit-oriented development, jobs-housing balance, and planning for walkability and bikeability. Through the TLC program, the Transportation Planning Board provides communities with technical assistance grants to catalyze or enhance planning efforts. TLC projects are generally targeted to a fairly small area or discrete set of issues. Lessons learned from these planning studies may then be implemented around the region.

¹ Source U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts, 2006 Estimate.

² Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Matrices P30, P32, P33, P43, P46, P49, P50, P51, P52, P53, P58, P62, P63, P64, P65, P67, P71, P72, P73, P74, P76, P77, P82, P87, P90, PCT47, PCT52, and PCT53

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter focuses on existing transportation conditions along and in the immediate vicinity of South Washington Street. It discusses some of the core challenges that pedestrians face and highlights some of the recent developments in the area.

Orientation to the Study Area

Observations in this chapter are based on field reconnaissance, input and guidance from City staff, analysis of GIS data obtained from the City, Fairfax County, and VDOT, review of current planning documents and responses generated during a stakeholder walking tour.

Documents reviewed or consulted include:

- City of Falls Church Vision and Long-Term Strategic Plan (2006)
- City of Falls Church Comprehensive Plan (2005)
- City Center Transportation Master Plan (2007)
- City of Falls Church Bicycle Map
- VDOT Minimum Standards of Entrances To State Highways (2003)
- VDOT Road Design Manual
- VDOT Traffic Engineering Manual

Stakeholder Walking Tour

On March 14, 2008, key stakeholders were invited to participate in a facilitated walking tour of the study area (see Figure 2-1). Participants were selected for their knowledge of conditions along South Washington Street, familiarity or involvement with planning, or interest in walkability and transportation in general. Stakeholders were given a written survey with maps of the study area, and they were asked to provide impressions of South Washington Street on several topics relating to transportation. Participants also provided feedback orally during the walking tour. A copy of the walking tour and a spreadsheet summarizing the comments are appended to this document.

Observations

The character of South Washington Street changes as one moves west from Broad Street to the City limits. There are general characteristics that reflect corridor-long conditions, and there are more-specific issues that are found in a particular segment of South Washington Street. For the purposes of this report, the observations have been divided into five primary groupings:

1. Corridor-Long Observations
2. Broad Street to Hillwood Avenue
3. Hillwood Avenue to South Maple Avenue
4. South Maple Avenue to Greenway Boulevard
5. Greenway Boulevard to the City Limits (approx. Welcome Drive)



Figure 2-1: Stakeholder Walking Tour, South Washington Street

The following section provides a general discussion of the roadway, pedestrian accommodations and land use characteristics for each grouping. Also included are highlights from the stakeholder walking tour.

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Corridor-Long Observations

Roadway

South Washington Street is entirely contained within the City of Falls Church from Broad Street to approximately the intersection with South Maple Avenue. From this intersection west to the end of the study area, the City limit line runs down the centerline of South Washington Street with City of Falls Church to the north and Fairfax County to the south.

South Washington Street is a four-lane highway that is a signed and numbered route (Route 29) on the US highway system. Portions of the highway are divided by raised medians (concrete and landscaped), striped medians, center turn lanes, or twin yellow stripes.

There are modest elevation changes that impact sight distances along the corridor. For example, there is a depression at South Maple Avenue and South Washington Street that impedes a pedestrian's ability to see westbound cars cresting a small rise near the intersection with Tinner Hill Road.

The road carries approximately 26,000-29,000 vehicles per day (City Center Transportation Plan - 2007), and there are four signalized intersections in the study area (Broad Street, Annandale Road, Hillwood Avenue, Greenway Boulevard). Vehicle speed limit is posted at 25 mph on westbound South Washington Street in conformance with the City-wide maximum speed limit of 25 mph. There is a sign on eastbound South Washington Street indicating a speed limit of 35 mph, although this speed limit sign is in the Fairfax County portion of the street.

There are 75 driveways and 18 bus stops along the length of the corridor. Many businesses have multiple driveways entering South Washington Street, and there are a few continuous curb cuts that stretch the entire frontage of a property.

Transit

Currently, transit service is provided by both Washington Metropolitan Transit Agency (WMATA) Metro bus and the City of Falls Church GEORGE local bus service. WMATA also provides service for disabled riders with the MetroACCESS system. Fairfax County Connector buses travel along the South Washington Street corridor but do not currently stop at any of the bus stops in the study area.

Pedestrian Accommodations

There is a continuous concrete sidewalk along both sides of South Washington Street, with the exception of the previously mentioned continuous curb cuts and the traffic island located at the intersection of South Washington Street and Hillwood Avenue.

Sidewalks are generally in good repair, but there are locations where sidewalks have been displaced by tree roots or other causes (see Figure 2-2). This creates a challenging situation for persons with disabilities, parents pushing strollers or others with mobility limitations.



Figure 2-2: Sidewalk Displacement on South Washington Street near Broad Street

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There are three signalized crosswalks crossing South Washington Street: Broad Street, Annandale Road, and Marshall Street. There are few marked crosswalks running parallel to South Washington Street.

The City of Falls Church Bicycle Route Map indicates that a planned bicycle route runs along East Fairfax Street, across South Washington Street to West Annandale Road. The bicycle route then continues to South Maple Avenue along a path connecting the intersection of West Annandale to the intersection of South Maple Avenue and Gibson Street. The bicycle route runs west along South Maple Avenue to Cavalier Trail Park where it turns to the north on the Cavalier Trail. A copy of the Route Map may be found in the appendix.

During the stakeholder walking tour, a number of pedestrians were seen crossing South Washington Street mid-block (not at an intersection, see Figure 2-3). Few were actually seen using one of the crosswalks provided at signalized intersections. When a pedestrian crosses mid-block, it puts both the pedestrian and passing vehicles at greater risk of a collision.

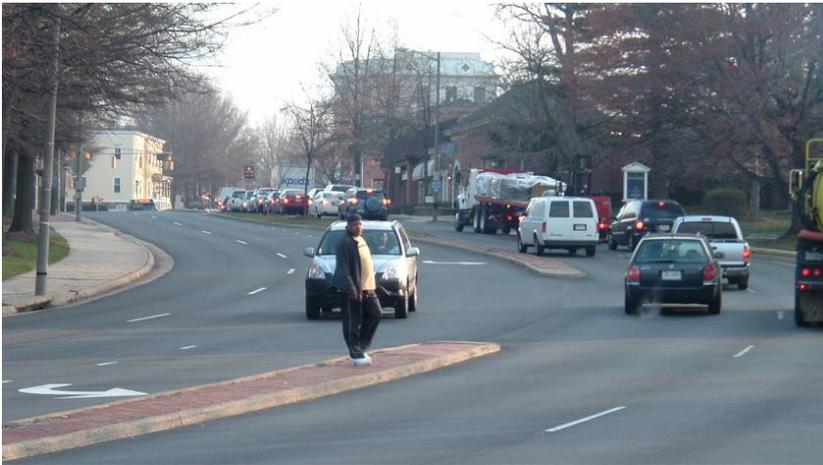


Figure 2-3: South Washington Street near The Falls Church

Traffic

Heavy traffic volumes and high speeds are a defining characteristic of the study area. According to the 2007 City Center Transportation Plan, nearly 30,000 cars travel on South Washington Street every day. In addition, the Washington Street/Broad Street intersection has the highest observed pedestrian counts (usage) in the City Center, according to the Transportation Plan. A critical challenge in redeveloping the area will be to encourage land use and transportation patterns that are safer and more comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists, while still accommodating the large volumes of automobiles. Enhanced transit service, coupled with non-motorized facility improvements may encourage people to walk and bicycle; nevertheless, motor vehicle traffic in the area is projected to increase over time.

According to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Falls Church, South Washington Street is one of the City roadways experiencing the most traffic and highest speeds. While the majority of City of Falls Church roadways have a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour, portions of eastbound South Washington Street that are in Fairfax County have a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour. Anecdotal evidence suggests that vehicles are routinely traveling at speeds exceeding either posted speed limit.

The City Center Transportation Plan provides additional evidence identifying South Washington Street as one of the more challenging venues in City of Falls Church. According to the plan, the intersection of South Washington Street and Annandale Road had the City's highest number of vehicle crashes in the two-year period between 2004 and 2006 (16 crashes).

The following sections of this chapter provide a more detailed description of the four subareas of the South Washington Street study area:

1. Broad Street to Hillwood Avenue
2. Hillwood Avenue to South Maple Avenue
3. South Maple Avenue to Greenway Boulevard
4. Greenway Boulevard to the City Limits (approx. Welcome Drive)

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Hillwood Avenue to South Maple Avenue

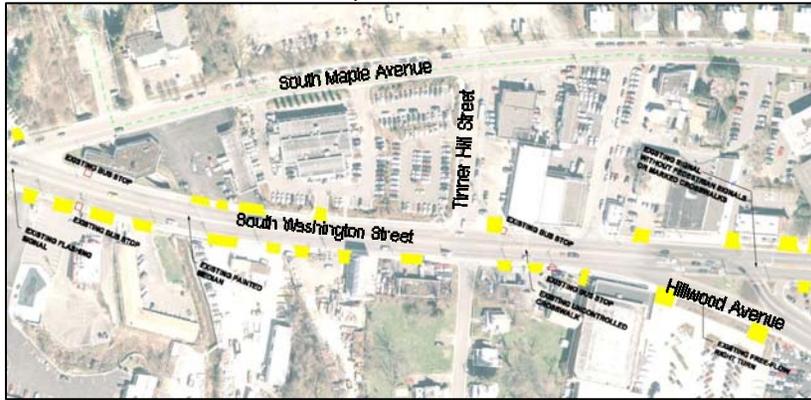
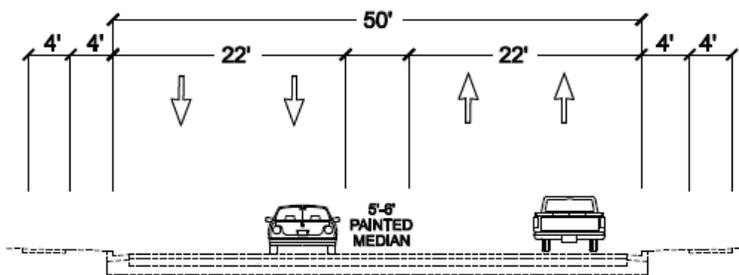


Figure 2-5: Hillwood Avenue to South Maple Avenue

Roadway

The roadway in this section of South Washington Street is a four-lane divided roadway with a 5' to 6'-wide painted median.



Existing Section- Hillwood Avenue to South Maple Avenue

South Maple Avenue intersects South Washington Street at an angle, and there is a flashing yellow light across South Washington to alert oncoming traffic of turning vehicles. During the walking tour, eastbound turning vehicles were observed turning left onto South Maple Avenue at relatively high rates of speed, failing to yield to pedestrians.

Pedestrian Accommodations

There are continuous sidewalks along both sides of South Washington Street in this segment of the corridor. However, South Maple Avenue and the portion of Tinner Hill Road extending north to South Maple Avenue are the only side streets with sidewalks along this section of the corridor.



Figure 2-6: South Washington Street intersection with South Maple Avenue

Pedestrians walking east or west along the northern side of South Washington Street must contend with a long crossing distance at the South Maple Avenue intersection (approximately 100 feet). Further complicating the crossing for pedestrians, eastbound cars turning left from South Washington Street onto South Maple Avenue are frequently moving very quickly and are not required to stop before turning.

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Land Use

The middle segment of the corridor is lined with low to modest-scale commercial developments. Buildings tend to be single-occupant. On the north side of South Washington Street, many of the building façades are fairly close to the roadway. Buildings on the southern side of South Washington Street have somewhat larger setbacks. Properties are designed and oriented primarily for access by automobile or truck. The commercial/light industrial character of this segment is punctuated by the Tinner Hill neighborhood on the south side of South Washington Street. This historic African American neighborhood consists of one block of single family dwellings and is still home to descendents of the founding families. Also in this segment is a construction supply yard, several auto services and other light industrial uses.

The new Pearson Square development is one block to the north on South Maple Avenue. This 230-unit multistory condominium complex was recently completed and is not fully sold out as of the preparation of this plan. This project is billed as being within “a short, pedestrian-friendly stroll of nearly everything City of Falls Church has to offer,”³ and it will likely generate significant pedestrian traffic in and around the study area.

Cavalier Trail Park is located just off South Washington Street at the intersection with South Maple Avenue. This park is a gateway to a popular recreational trail that draws visitors from around the City and portions of nearby Fairfax County.



Figure 2-7: Pearson Square Apartments

Source: www.pearsonsquare.com

³ Pearson Square in the News:

http://www.newcondominiumguide.com/about/news_detail.html?news_id=47 Accessed October 12, 2008.

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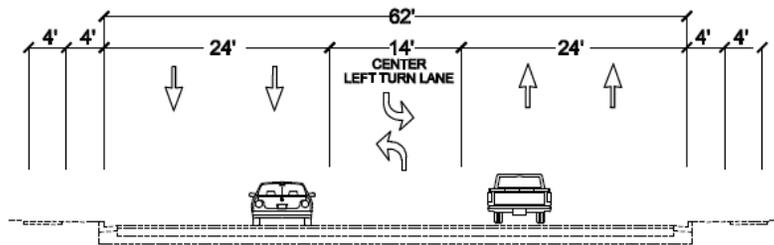
South Maple Avenue to Greenway Boulevard



Figure 2-8: South Maple Avenue to Greenway Boulevard

Roadway

In this three-block segment, South Washington Street is a five-lane roadway with a center turn lane.



Existing Section- South Maple Avenue to Greenway Boulevard

Pedestrian Accommodations

There are continuous sidewalks on both sides of South Washington Street in this segment of the study corridor; however, there are no signalized intersections or other features to help pedestrians cross South Washington Street.

Land Use

From South Maple Avenue west, South Washington Street is divided between two jurisdictions. The westbound lanes are in the City of Falls Church, and the eastbound lanes are in Fairfax County.

This segment of the corridor contains a mixture of residential, commercial and office buildings. Development is lower in intensity than it is closer to the center of City of Falls Church. Strip commercial and office lines both the north and south frontages of South Washington Street, and single-family residential neighborhoods extend along the side streets to the north and south.

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Greenway Boulevard west to End of Study Area



Figure 2-9: Greenway Boulevard to End of Study Area

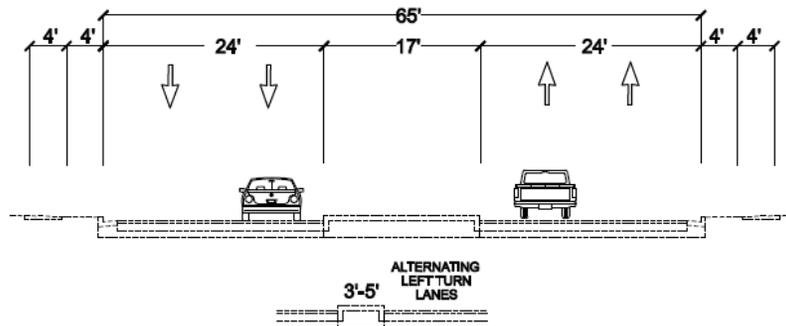
pedestrian signal heads, however, and pedestrians are advised to cross with the green light.

Land Use

South Washington Street from Greenway Boulevard west has a similar character to the preceding section. Uses include single- and multi-family residential and office. Buildings are set back further from the roadway and are lower in scale relative to properties between South Maple Avenue and Broad Street. Side streets on either side of the corridor lead to established single-family neighborhoods.

Roadway

This section of South Washington Street is four lanes with a divided turn lane. Western portions of the corridor have a landscaped median.



Existing Section – Greenway Boulevard to City Limits (Rosemary Lane)
 [Greenway Boulevard to Woodlawn Avenue- Alternating Left Turn Lanes
 Woodlawn Avenue to City Limits- Some Full Width Median]

Pedestrian Accommodations

There are continuous sidewalks on both sides of South Washington Street in this segment. The intersection at Marshall Street has marked crosswalks in all directions, and pedestrians crossing South Washington may push a button to cross the roadway. There are no

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN PRINCIPLES

This chapter outlines a series of design principles for pedestrian access and mobility along the South Washington Street corridor. These are meant to provide guidance for the ultimate character and functionality of the corridor and guide land-use and transportation decisions made over time. The specific short-term (0-5 years) and long-term (over 5 years) recommendations found in chapters 4 and 5 are intended to help the City of Falls Church balance the needs of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists on South Washington Street.

Introduction

As the South Washington Street corridor develops over time, physical spaces should be provided that build community and that are well-connected, accessible and comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians should be a central component of the long-term vision for the corridor. The transportation system and surrounding land uses should encourage walking by appealing to and engaging the pedestrian.

Create Vibrant Civic Space

Vibrant civic space should be created along the corridor. Mixed-use redevelopment, existing establishments along Broad Street at the eastern end of the corridor, and the Pearson Square development on South Maple Avenue will generate relatively large numbers of pedestrians. These pedestrians should be provided with visible public spaces to gather, thereby encouraging community interaction. Surrounding land uses and buildings should celebrate and reinforce this civic space. The City should evaluate opportunities to create large public plazas, as well as various smaller civic spaces.

Create a Pleasing Streetscape

Heavy traffic volumes, high speeds and little space between the roads and sidewalks create an inhospitable environment for pedestrians. As the area redevelops, pedestrian space should be separated from automobile space with landscape buffers that

include street trees (recommended 5' minimum), as well as other design approaches.

In addition, pedestrian space should be clearly articulated through design. As properties redevelop, the relocation of existing curb lines should be examined to maximize the length and width of center medians. Center medians provide pedestrian refuge at crossings, improve traffic flow by allowing left turn pockets, and provide a location for landscaping. Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate anticipated pedestrian volumes. A 5' minimum sidewalk width is recommended. Significantly wider sidewalks should be considered near Broad Street, in order to accommodate the particularly high pedestrian volumes at and around this intersection. Sidewalk surfaces should continue across driveways to clearly delineate the pedestrian space. Curb ramps should be provided for every crosswalk, to ensure safety and accessibility for all.

Automobile travel lanes should be no wider than is necessary to accommodate vehicles at the desired speed limits. Excessively wide lanes encourage drivers to travel at higher speeds and require pedestrians to cross wider streets. The excess space could possibly be used for center medians or bicycle lanes.

In general, design elements should be selected that improve pedestrian safety and naturally calm traffic.

Reduce Pedestrian Crossing Distances

Pedestrians should not have to cross more than 60 feet of road width at a time. Center medians should be used for pedestrian refuges. Crosswalks should be brought to and through medians, so pedestrians are not forced to choose between a median refuge and a crosswalk. The width of the pedestrian curb ramp through the center median should be as wide as possible (5' minimum) to accommodate users with assistive devices such as wheelchairs or multiple users at one time.

Maximizing the length and width of medians should be a priority, given the key safety function that they serve. Medians are needed not only at mid-block crossings, but at signalized intersections as well. While each signal should be designed to enable pedestrians to

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clear the entire width of the road, the median provides a refuge for slower moving pedestrians who may become caught in the center.

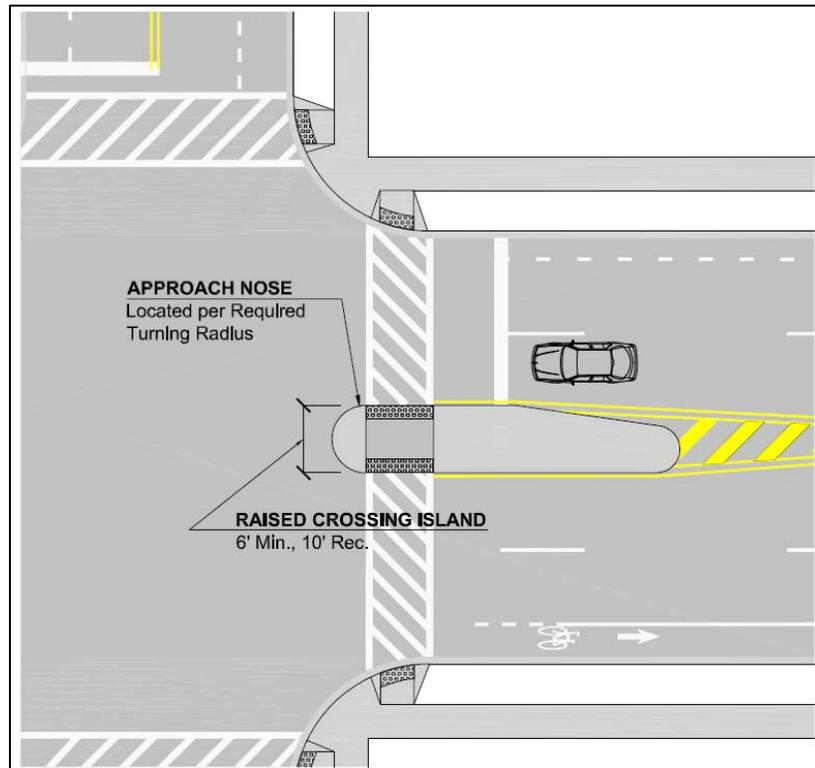


Figure 3-1: Median Design-Maryland SHA Bicycle and Pedestrian Guidelines

Figure 3-1 illustrates a typical design for a raised median at a street crossing. According to the AASHTO *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*, raised medians, or crossing islands “should be 6 ft or more to provide space for a wheelchair user or more than one pedestrian to wait.” Travel lanes may be narrowed to 10 feet in constrained conditions to provide space for the median. However, consideration should be given to traffic volume, speed, vehicle mix and presence of bicycles when narrowing lanes. While not recommended, raised medians may be

narrower than 6 feet. In this case the cut-through width should be widened to accommodate waiting pedestrians or cyclists.⁴

Encourage Pedestrian-Friendly Land Use and Urban Design

Mixed-use development can be more convenient and accessible for people on foot, because it often provides more destinations in close proximity to one another.

At the east end of the corridor, the properties and city blocks are larger, hindering pedestrian movement. In the long-term, large properties should be subdivided into multiple uses, and a road grid or pedestrian access should be established. Access should be extended through larger properties, providing an opportunity to create traditional main street areas that tie into an urban street grid. Buildings should be brought to the edge of the property and parking, vehicular access and service entrances should be provided either in structures or at the rear of properties. Sidewalks should be provided along both sides of any new streets and added to existing side streets where missing.

A critical element of the long-term vision for the area should be creating a more finely-grained pedestrian network that provides pedestrians with several choices in reaching any destination. A development pattern that moves buildings closer to the road is also more pedestrian friendly, because it shortens the distance between the sidewalk and the entrance and can create a more interesting environment.

Standardize Driveway Widths and Vehicle Access Management

Arguably, the most significant impediments to pedestrian travel along the South Washington Street corridor are the width and quantity of existing driveways. Pedestrians must contend with numerous potential conflicting movements and face undue exposure on entrances that are excessively wide. VDOT’s Entrance Standards recommend widths of 14’ to 20’ for one-way driveways

⁴ p. 75-76, *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, July 2004.

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and 30' to 40' for two-way driveways. To better promote pedestrian travel, other jurisdictions recommend 10' to 15' for one-way driveways and 22' to 25' for two-way driveways. As properties redevelop along the corridor, driveway widths should be reduced as much as is practical.

To take this process a step further, access management techniques should be employed to reduce the number of driveways (i.e. conflicting turning movements). Access management should be thought of as balancing the need for good mobility for through traffic with the provision of reasonable access to land uses. The use of access management techniques results in better traffic flow, enhanced property access and improved safety for motorists and pedestrians. Techniques include:

1. Driveways located on side streets as opposed to the major roadway.
2. Driveways on the major roadway are well offset from intersections, and are spaced as far apart as possible.
3. Restricting movements at driveways such as allowing "right in", "right out" only. This can be accomplished by raised medians on the major roadway, or channelizing medians at the driveway entrance.
4. Interconnecting parcels, so vehicular movements from one property to another don't have to occur on the major roadway. This can be accomplished by service roads or connected parking lots, preferably behind buildings.

Considerations for Proposed Recommendations

The TLC program has an emphasis on providing conceptual approaches that can be replicated region-wide, rather than detailed design improvements for a specific situation. Therefore it should be understood that all proposed changes would require additional detailed design and engineering analysis to develop final plans for each recommendation.

Furthermore, proposed changes would require review and approval by both VDOT and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) in addition to approval by City of Falls Church staff. Any changes that impact transit stops would require additional coordination with the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA).

CHAPTER 4: SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

This chapter outlines short-term (0-5 years) safety improvements to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment along the corridor. It should be understood that these recommendations are conceptual in nature and additional analysis and engineering is required to determine feasibility and ultimate design. These short-term improvements can be done relatively quickly and would require relatively modest investments.

(Note: order does not indicate importance)

S-1. GEOMETRIC CHANGES

Geometric changes are recommended to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety by reducing pedestrian crossing distances, slowing vehicle turning movements and increasing driver visibility. Currently South Maple Avenue intersects South Washington Street at a significant skew angle. This creates sight distance issues by making South Maple Avenue southbound drivers look over their shoulder to see vehicles and pedestrians approaching from the their left (east). Due to the flat angle, eastbound left turns can be taken at a relatively high speed. The skew angle also lengthens the pedestrian crossing on the north side of South Washington Street, increasing pedestrian exposure.

The recommended geometric changes include:

- a. Reconfiguring the intersection of South Maple Avenue and South Washington Street as more of a "tee", and closing the entrance just to the west. This will create fewer, slower and more predictable turning movements while reducing the pedestrian crossing distance. The proposed signalization mentioned later in this chapter (recommendation S-3) will also improve intersection safety.

S-2. CURB EXTENSIONS AND CORNER RADIUS REDUCTIONS

Curb extensions and corner radius reductions can be used

to shorten pedestrian crossing distances, minimize exposure and improve sight distances. Several of the side streets along the corridor appear to have extra pavement width, particularly those with on-street parking that is restricted near the corners. These locations could be retrofitted with curb extensions that essentially push the curb line into the street the width of the parking lane and leave approximately 24' of width for vehicular passage.

Some locations appear to have corner radii larger than necessary. These locations could be retrofitted with smaller radii, which slow turning vehicles, reduce pedestrian crossing distances and allow curb ramps and crosswalks to be placed closer to the corner, increasing the visibility of pedestrians. The ultimate feasibility of the proposed curb extensions and radius reductions will depend on an engineering analysis of the turning movements of appropriate design vehicles. Some of the curb extension locations may require the relocation of existing storm drainage inlets. All of these considerations should be included in a detailed feasibility analysis prior to actual design and construction. Curb extensions are recommended for the following South Washington Street intersections:

- a. Rosemary Lane
- b. Jackson Street
- c. Woodlawn Avenue
- d. Marshall Street
- e. George Mason Road
- f. Greenway Boulevard
- g. Cameron Road
- h. Westmoreland Street/Summerfield Road
- i. Cavalier Trail
- j. Tinner Hill Road
- k. Wallace Street
- l. East Fairfax Street

S-3. TRAFFIC SIGNALS

New traffic signals are recommended along the corridor for a number of reasons. With the relatively long distance

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between existing signals at Marshall Street and Hillwood Avenue, traffic has the opportunity to reach higher speeds without stopping, and gaps in traffic to accommodate turning or crossing (including pedestrians) are significantly reduced. New signals would serve to calm traffic, and create gaps for turning and crossing movements. The ultimate feasibility of signals at these locations is dependant on a signal warrant and traffic analysis.

- a. A signal is recommended at Greenway Boulevard which serves Thomas Jefferson Elementary School on the north side of the corridor and the communities of Jefferson Village and Greenway Downs on the south side.
- b. A second signal is recommended at South Maple Avenue to facilitate a pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of Cavalier Trail Park and the commercial establishments on the south side of South Washington Street. This location also corresponds to recommendations made by stakeholders in a survey conducted earlier in the project. It should be noted that a signal at this location might be later relocated if the portion of South Maple Avenue intersecting South Washington Street is closed (see recommendation L-4).
- c. A pedestrian hybrid signal is recommended at the uncontrolled crosswalk east of Tinner Hill Road. The existing crosswalk serves bus stops and commercial establishments on each side of road and is located at a crest in South Washington Street. Although there is relatively good sight distance approaching the crossing, the pedestrian hybrid signal is recommended nonetheless based on the relatively high volume of approximately 25,000 vehicles per day, and because of the lack of a center median for pedestrian refuge.

A pedestrian hybrid signal, also known as a "HAWK" signal, is used to warn and control traffic at a marked crosswalk and otherwise unsignalized location (see Figure 4-1). The signal is pedestrian activated and controls vehicle traffic on the road using a combination of red and yellow signal lenses, while the pedestrian crossing is controlled by pedestrian signal heads. The pedestrian hybrid signal should be accompanied by pedestrian warning signs and advance stop bars to improve the visibility of the crossing.

The HAWK signal has been used in other jurisdictions, contributing to high motorist yielding rates. Drafts of the upcoming version of the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* contain guidance on the application, design and operation of these signals.



Figure 4-1: HAWK signal, Tucson, Arizona

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S-4. SIDEWALK REPAIRS

Sidewalks should be repaired where there are significant cracks, differential settlement and displacement caused by tree roots. Several locations needing repair were observed during site visits, and they include:

- a. The north side of South Washington Street between Jackson Street and Marshall Street.
- b. The southeast corner of the Cameron Road intersection with South Washington Street—an existing utility pole reduces the effective sidewalk width to approximately 2.5'. The sidewalk should be widened into the adjacent parking lot to provide a clear sidewalk width of 5' to 6'.
- c. The south side of South Washington Street near Broad Street.

S-5. CROSSWALK MARKING

Crosswalks should be striped on all four legs of signalized intersections.

- a. High visibility or “ladder” style markings are recommended at signalized intersections and for the crossing of South Washington Street east of Tinner Hill Road, in order to increase the visibility of the crossings.
- b. At Tinner Hill Road, relatively high turning volumes are anticipated towards Pearson Square to the north; therefore, it is recommended that the crossing on the north side of the intersection be a raised “speed table” crosswalk to slow turning traffic (see Figure 4-2).
- c. At the intersection of Marshall Street and South Washington Street, the existing crosswalk markings are skewed, creating longer than necessary crossings and increasing pedestrian exposure. Consideration should be given to making these crosswalks perpendicular to the road. It should be



Figure 4-2: Raised speed table crosswalk, Boulder, Colorado

noted that this would require additional pedestrian signals, pushbuttons and curb ramps.

- d. Parallel crosswalk markings are recommended at crosswalks across side streets. A key reason for this is to provide visual continuity of the pedestrian corridors on both sides of South Washington Street.
- e. At the intersection of South Washington Street and Hillwood Avenue, crosswalks are recommended for the north and east legs of the intersection (see Figure 4-3).

Due to the relatively high speed and uncontrolled turning movements by eastbound vehicles turning off of South Washington Street onto Hillwood Avenue, crosswalk markings on the southern or western legs of the intersection are not included in the short term recommendations. These crosswalks should be installed in conjunction with geometric changes to the intersection (see long term recommendation L-3).

S-6. CURB RAMPS

Curb ramps provide pedestrians a transition from the

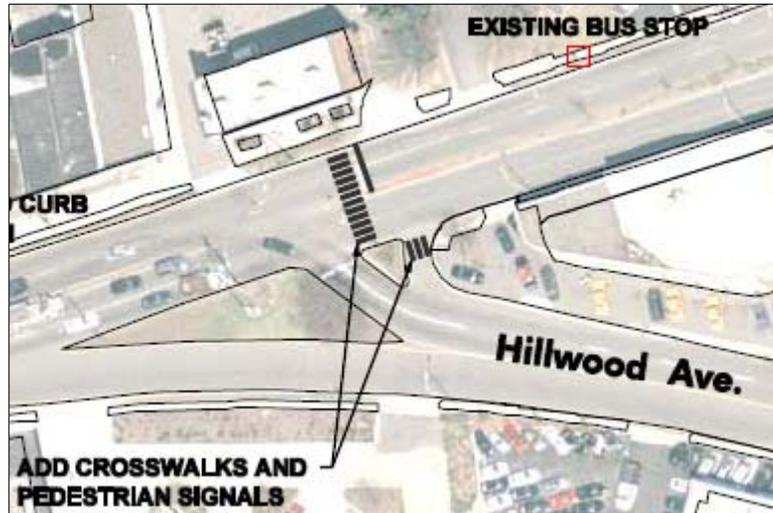


Figure 4-3: Short-term Recommendations for Hillwood Ave. Intersection

sidewalk down to the street pavement level and then back up to the sidewalk again. Any locations in the study area (a) with missing curb ramps, (b) with curb ramps that are missing detectable warnings or landing areas at the top and bottom of the ramps, or (c) that exceed the slope values required by ADA Accessibility Guidelines should be improved.

Current best practices indicate a preference for using paired perpendicular ramps (two ramps on each corner). Single large diagonal ramps pointing towards the center of the intersection can mislead pedestrians who are blind. Two ramps per corner should be provided throughout the study area.

S-7. RAISED MEDIANS

Raised medians or pedestrian refuge islands are very useful for improving the safety of pedestrian crosswalks, particularly on multi-lane roadways with heavy traffic

volumes and relatively high speeds. They improve pedestrian safety at locations with and without traffic signals and may be used at both intersection and midblock locations. According to a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) study on crosswalks at uncontrolled locations, “the presence of a raised median was associated with a significantly lower pedestrian crash rate at multi-lane sites with both marked and unmarked crosswalks.”⁵

In order to provide safety benefits, a median must physically protect pedestrians. Along the South Washington Street corridor, medians should be extended to make them as long and wide as possible. Accessible pedestrian walkways should be provided through medians and crosswalks should be shifted to create additional space for a raised approach nose. Design considerations are included below:

- Raised medians require at-grade cut-throughs or curb ramps to provide an accessible path
- Medians should be aligned directly with crosswalks
- Raised approach noses should be included at intersection crossing islands
- Medians should meet the luminance contrast levels needed to improve detection by older drivers, per the recommendations in FHWA’s Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians (2001)
- If the median is landscaped, the vegetation must not obstruct necessary clear sight triangles

⁵ Zegeer, C., J. Stewart, H. Huang, and P. Lagerwey. “Safety Effects of Marked vs. Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations- Executive Summary and Recommended Guidelines.” Report No. FHWA-RD-01-075, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D.C., February 2002.

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Final median location and shape will be dependent on an engineering analysis considering the turning envelopes of appropriate design vehicles. Due to the constraints of geometry and limited road width, use of raised medians may be limited to the following locations:

- a. Greenway Boulevard and South Maple Avenue intersection
- b. South Washington Street and Annandale Road intersection (*extension*)
- c. South Washington Street and Broad Street intersection (*extension*).

S-8. PEDESTRIAN COUNTDOWN SIGNALS

All signalized crossings should include pedestrian countdown signals. Countdown signals are beneficial because they give information to the pedestrians on the time remaining to cross the street.

Countdown signals should be added at Marshall Street, Hillwood Avenue, Broad Street and at new proposed traffic signals. They should also be added to the two approaches at Annandale Road that don't currently have them.

Traffic signals in the area should not rely entirely on pedestrian actuated systems. A number of studies have shown that pedestrians typically are unaware that they must press the push button in order for the signal to provide adequate time for a pedestrian to cross. If possible, considering traffic implications, all signal phases should be timed so that they accommodate pedestrian crossings. If needed, activated signals should be used primarily for locations where pedestrians need to "call" a red phase (such as at minor streets).

Right turn on red restrictions and leading pedestrian intervals should be considered at locations with heavier volumes of pedestrian crossings and many turning vehicle movements. The existing right turn on red restrictions at Broad Street should remain in effect.

All signals in the study area should include Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS). APS include a variety of different features that make traffic signals more accessible, particularly to pedestrians with vision impairments. The most common feature of these signals is the use of audible tones and/or vibration to indicate the WALK interval. The signals may include a number of additional features, including but not limited to, tactile arrows, tactile maps, and Braille and raised print information. Pushbuttons should be placed in accessible locations near the appropriate crosswalk/curb ramp.

S-9. RECONFIGURE BUS STOPS

Eighteen bus stops are located along the study corridor and are situated with various orientations to adjacent intersections; however, most are situated on the near side of intersections. Several jurisdictions have published guidance regarding the placement of bus stops and adjacent amenities while considering intersection characteristics, pedestrian access and safety, and bus route operation. *Arlington County's Bus Stop Design Standards* is a good source for state-of-the-practice guidance and gives advantages and disadvantages for various configurations.

In general, bus stops located on the far side of intersections are better for pedestrian safety because the stopped bus does not obscure traffic control devices or pedestrian movements at the intersection. It is recommended that the City evaluate the existing bus stops and consider these best-practice guidelines.

Because the bus stops serve both Falls Church *George* buses as well as WMATA buses, the City should coordinate with the appropriate transit agency to ensure that any stop modifications are acceptable to all entities.

S-10. REDUCE SPEED LIMITS

In accordance with the City of Falls Church standards, and to assist with slowing vehicular traffic and improving the pedestrian environment, it is recommended that 25 mile-per-hour speed limit signs be posted along the corridor on

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both the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County sides of the street.

S-11. **INSTALL GATEWAY TREATMENTS**

In an effort to calm traffic approaching the corridor from the west, where the posted speed is 45 miles per hour, "gateway treatments" are recommended. Gateway treatments could include a speed display, and visual narrowing such as alternate color or painted gutters. Another gateway treatment could be the use of optical speed bars, i.e. transverse pavement marking lines with spacing that decreases in the direction of travel to give the driver the sensation that they are moving at an excessive speed. Gateway treatments are recommended on eastbound South Washington Street in the area of Rosemary Lane and Woodlawn Avenue.

S-12. **IMPROVE BICYCLE ROUTE SIGNAGE**

One of the City's bike routes crosses the corridor near E. Fairfax Street and Annandale Road and then follows South Maple Avenue west to the Cavalier Trail Park near the intersection of South Maple Avenue and South Washington Street. Improved wayfinding signage is recommended near E. Fairfax Street, Annandale Road and South Maple Avenue to inform cyclists where to turn and what facility to use (i.e., street, sidewalk or path) to safely remain on the route. Signage would include advanced information before decision points, clear direction at decision points, and destination and mileage information. This signage would also be useful for pedestrians trying to access key destinations such as Cavalier Trail Park.

CHAPTER 5: LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

This chapter provides recommendations for long-term (over five years) capital improvements to enhance the pedestrian environment. These improvements would involve additional planning and design and higher levels of investment, but should be considered as the area redevelops over time. (Note: order does not indicate importance)

- L-1. **Develop Streetscape Plan for South Washington Street**
A primary goal of the streetscape plan would be to create physical buffers between the road and sidewalk, thus improving the pedestrian environment for walkers. Where possible, physical buffers, such as trees or decorative lights, should be provided between the road and sidewalks.



Figure 5-1: Physical buffers, Boulder, Colorado

- L-2. **Develop Maintenance Plan for South Washington Street**
A rigorous maintenance and re-striping plan should be developed to ensure that crosswalks, stop lines and other road markings are visible.
- L-3. **Hillwood Avenue and South Washington Street Intersection Improvements**
Geometric changes are recommended to the intersection of Hillwood Avenue and South Washington Street to eliminate the free flow right turn movement from eastbound South Washington Street. The current intersection configuration makes pedestrian travel along the south side of South Washington Street relatively difficult by forcing pedestrians to cross relatively high speed traffic on the free-flow ramp.

A reconfigured intersection could either make eastbound right turns occur at the existing signal, or via a realigned slip ramp that forces turning traffic to slow as they turn onto Hillwood Avenue. Crosswalks and pedestrian signals on the southern and western sides of the intersection should be installed concurrently with the roadway geometry modifications.

The ultimate feasibility of the proposed intersection reconfiguration will depend on an engineering analysis considering the turning envelopes of appropriate design vehicles, and a traffic analysis that evaluates the congestion implications of the modified turning movements.

- L-4. **Expand Cavalier Trail Park**
The City of Falls Church expressed a desire to evaluate closing South Maple Avenue and expanding Cavalier Trail Park towards South Washington Street. This would eliminate the existing geometric issues involving the skew of South Maple Avenue, and provide a very visible gateway to the park. Property ownership and right-of-way issues would have to be resolved prior to this change.

The modifications would involve creating a cul-de-sac on South Maple Avenue approximately 150' north of South Washington Street. Vehicular entrances to the Aurora House

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and Cavalier Trail Park would be provided from the cul-de-sac. The existing South Maple Avenue Bridge and building over the stream would be removed. Stream embankment restoration would be needed. A new pedestrian/trail bridge is recommended to provide a direct connection from South Washington Street to the existing trail. Existing pavement in the area would be removed and replaced with vegetation.

With the closure of South Maple Avenue, a new signal is recommended at the South Washington Street/Tinner Hill Road intersection. This signal would provide the desired traffic calming previously mentioned for the proposed South Maple Avenue signal. With a signal provided at Tinner Hill Road, the short-term improvements of a raised crosswalk and hybrid signal just to the east would not be needed. The closure of South Maple Avenue and the new signal at Tinner Hill Road would require a signal warrant and traffic analysis. Proposed stream changes may require a hydrologic and hydraulic analysis.

CHAPTER 6: COST ESTIMATES

The construction cost estimates were developed for the various improvement recommendations by identifying pay items and establishing rough quantities. Unit costs are in 2008 dollars and were assigned based on historical cost data from the Virginia Department of Transportation and other sources. The costs shown only reflect the cost of constructing the particular pedestrian facility indicated, and do not reflect other costs that may be associated with a larger project. The costs are intended to be general and used for long-range planning purposes. A 25% contingency is applied to the cost for each item. The construction estimates **do not** include costs for planning, surveying, engineering design, right-of-way acquisition, mobilization, maintenance of traffic during construction, utility adjustments, lighting, or future maintenance. Construction costs will vary based on the ultimate project scope (i.e. combination with other projects) and economic conditions at the time of construction.

A detailed breakdown of the cost estimate is included in the appendix.

Construction Cost Estimate		
<u>NO.</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>COST</u>
Short-Term - 1	Geometric Changes to the S. Maple Street/S. Washington Street Intersection (Geometric changes only, signal and crosswalk changes are not included)	\$36,000
Short-Term - 2	Curb Extensions and Radius Reductions (Assumes some drainage inlet modifications)	\$340,000
Short-Term - 3	New Traffic Signals at Greenway Boulevard and S. Maple Street	\$375,000
Short-Term - 3c	Pedestrian Hybrid Signal East of Tinner Hill Road	\$100,000
Short-Term - 4	Sidewalk Repair (Assumes 20 Spot Improvements)	\$10,000
Short-Term - 5	Crosswalks at Signals and Across Side Streets	\$15,000
Short-Term - 6	New and Upgraded Curb Ramps	\$300,000
Short-Term - 7	New Raised Medians and Extended Medians	\$110,000
Short-Term - 8	Pedestrian Countdown Signals	\$250,000
Short-Term - 9	Relocate Existing Bus Stops (Assumes moving 9 bus stops)	\$12,000
Short-Term - 10	Posted Speed Limit Signs (Assumes 6 signs)	\$2,000
Short-Term - 11	Gateway Treatments	\$55,000
Short-Term - 12	Wayfinding Signage Improvements	\$3,000
	Short Term Subtotal	\$1,600,000
Long-Term - 3	Geometric Changes to the Hillwood Avenue/S. Washington Street Intersection (Geometric changes only, signal and crosswalk changes are not included)	\$150,000
Long-Term - 4	Closing S. Maple Street at S. Washington Street (Includes geometric changes: road, building and bridge demolition; new trail bridge and stream restoration. Signal and crosswalk changes are not included)	\$750,000
	Long-Term Subtotal	\$900,000
	Total Estimated Cost	\$2,500,000

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The City of Falls Church *Vision and Long Term Strategic Plan* articulates a number of policies that emphasize community-level walkability. The vision statement describes a City of Falls Church that is "...built on a human scale, where visitors and residents alike can find everything they need while experiencing the fabric of life in a friendly, close-knit community."

Today's City of Falls Church is not far from achieving this vision, and recent planning decisions move the City closer to the ideal of a walkable community supported by human scale development. Now is the time to begin a thorough planning process that builds on improvements currently underway and ensures that current opportunities are fully captured. Through its emphasis on pedestrian issues, this study establishes multi-modal transportation (including transit, motor vehicles, walking and bicycling) as a cornerstone goal of all improvements and redevelopment in the area. Additional goals of this study are listed below.

- Improve pedestrian access and mobility
- Balance short-term safety versus long-term vision
- Provide recommendations that are transferable to other locations in the Metropolitan Washington region.

The South Washington Street corridor has the ability to become a vibrant pedestrian space. Many challenges lie ahead, as the area is characterized today by sprawling suburban style development that is primarily automobile-oriented. With ongoing and future redevelopment opportunities, now is the time to redesign the corridor to achieve a balanced transportation system that equally accommodates all modes.

Appendix

City of Falls Church Improvements – Detailed Cost Assessment													
							Total	Quant	Item	Unit	Unit Cost	Total	
		Geometric Changes											
Short Term	S-1	Geometric Changes to S. Maple Street						1					
								200	Remove Pavement	CY	\$25.00	\$5,000.00	
								150	Remove Curb	LF	\$10.00	\$1,500.00	
								150	New Curb	LF	\$35.00	\$5,250.00	
								0	Detectable Warning	SF	\$8.00	\$0.00	
								200	Fill, Seed and Mulch	CY	\$30.00	\$6,000.00	
								900	Concrete Sidewalk	SF	\$5.00	\$4,500.00	
								2	Drainage Inlet and Connection	EA	\$4,000.00	\$8,000.00	
								1	Traffic Items 10%	LS	\$3,025.00	\$3,025.00	
								1	Landscaping 10%	LS	\$3,025.00	\$3,025.00	
		Proposed Signs											
Short Term	S-12	Bike Wayfinding						10	10	Sign	EA	\$250.00	\$2,500.00
Short Term	S-10	Speed Limit						6	6	Sign	EA	\$250.00	\$1,500.00
		Bus Stop											
Short Term	S-9	New Bus Stop						Assume 9					
								0	Remove Pavement	CY	\$20.00	\$0.00	
								0	New Reinf Conc Pave	CY	\$200.00	\$0.00	
								1080	Concrete Sidewalk	SF	\$5.00	\$5,400.00	
								9	Sign	EA	\$250.00	\$2,250.00	
Short Term	S-9	Remove Bus Stop						Assume 9					
								0	Remove Reinf Conc Pave	CY	\$125.00	\$0.00	
								0	New Aggregate Base	CY	\$50.00	\$0.00	
								0	New Asphalt Pave	Ton	\$60.00	\$0.00	
								9	Remove Sign	EA	\$250.00	\$2,250.00	

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City of Falls Church Improvements – Detailed Cost Assessment													
							Total	Quant	Item	Unit	Unit Cost	Total	
		Traffic Signal Equipment											
Short Term	S-3	Add Full Signal						2	2	New Full Signal	EA	\$150,000.00	\$300,000.00
Short Term	S-3	Add Hawk Signal						1	1	New Hawk Signal	EA	\$80,000.00	\$80,000.00
Short Term	S-8	Pedestrian Signal Heads						34	34	Add 4 Pedestrian Signal Heads	EA	\$5,000.00	\$170,000.00
Short Term	S-8	Remove or Fix Push Button						34					
		<i>Assume 1 Button Per Location</i>							34	New Push Button	EA	\$500.00	\$17,000.00
		Curb Ramp											
Short Term	S-6	Construct Curb Ramp						76					
		<i>Assume 70SF per location</i>							5320	Remove Conc Sidewalk	CY	\$30.00	\$159,600.00
		<i>Assume 20LF per location</i>							1520	Remove Curb	LF	\$10.00	\$15,200.00
		<i>Assume 20LF per location</i>							1520	New Curb	LF	\$20.00	\$30,400.00
		<i>Assume 70SF per location</i>							5320	Concrete Sidewalk	SF	\$5.00	\$26,600.00
		<i>Assume 12SF per location</i>							912	Detectable Warning	SF	\$8.00	\$7,296.00
		Crosswalk											
Short Term	S-5	Build Raised Crossing						1					
		<i>Assume 25' by 25' = 90SY per location</i>							70	Milling	SY	\$6.00	\$420.00
		<i>Assume 25' by 25' average 2" height = 8 Ton per location</i>							8	Asphalt	Ton	\$60.00	\$480.00
		<i>Assume 6 Symbols and some lines per location</i>							6	Pavement Marking Symbols	EA	\$300.00	\$1,800.00
Short Term	S-5	Stripe Parallel Line Crosswalk						15					
		<i>Assume 50' Crosswalk, Assume 150 LF of 4"</i>							2250	Pavement Marking 8" (4"x2)	LF	\$1.50	\$3,375.00
Short Term	S-5	Stripe High Visibility Crosswalk						18	18	HV Crosswalk	EA	\$300.00	\$5,400.00
Short Term	S-3	Stripe Stop Bar						15					
		<i>Assume 30' Per EA, Assume 200 LF of 4"</i>							3000	Pavement Marking 12" (4"x6)	LF	\$1.50	\$4,500.00
		<i>Assume 4 signs per location</i>							0	Signs	EA	\$250.00	\$0.00
Short Term	S-10	Stripe Optical Speed Bars & Narrowing & Speed Display											
		<i>Assume 30' Per EA, Assume 3600 LF of 4"</i>							3600	Pavement Marking	LF	\$1.50	\$5,400.00

